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McIlvaine. The Mexican War. 1847

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*Speech*  
**SPEECH**

OF

HON. A. R. McILVAINE, OF PENNSYL'A,

ON

**THE MEXICAN WAR.**

DELIVERED

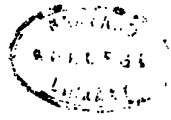
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 4, 1847

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## THE MEXICAN WAR.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, upon the Civil and Diplomatic Appropriation Bill, and the discussion having turned upon the Mexican War—

Mr. McILVAINE said, that he had found himself rather unexpectedly in possession of the floor, (the House being thin;) but that the empty benches before him had less terror for him than a struggle for the floor in a full House. But he perceived by the galleries that the *people* feel more interest in this question than the members of this House, and it was to them that he proposed to speak.

It is not my purpose (Mr. McL. proceeded to say) to discuss at length the immediate cause of this war, or to produce any elaborate proof of by whom the first blow was struck; but rather to endeavor to ascertain our present position, and our duty under it, as I understand it.

It was contended by all of us who opposed the annexation of Texas, then in a state of war with Mexico, that by bringing her into the Union we should adopt her war, and necessarily involve the country in the conflict. It was boldly but truly proclaimed by a Texan Senator, upon taking his seat in the other end of the Capitol, that in taking Texas, you took her condition, and were bound to defend her soil and fight her battles. This was the ground assumed by the Whigs prior to annexation; it is the ground which they still occupy.

But in spite of the remonstrances and warnings of the friends of the peace and honor of the country, and with a recklessness which seemed to acknowledge no law but that of might, Texas was brought into the Union as a State; war has ensued; the country is involved in it; and no one will pretend to deny that it resulted from, if it was not the necessary consequence of, annexation.

I will not say that war was *inevitable* upon the annexation of Texas. I have never said it. Indeed, from the willingness of the Mexican Government to treat upon the question of boundary, as preliminary to the restoration of the relation of amity, which had been interrupted by annexation, it is probable it might have been avoided. But this I will say, that whatever possibility there may have been of avoiding a conflict with Mexico, the President *effectually*, if not *purposely*, precluded that possibility, by marching his army to the utmost verge of the disputed territory, and assuming a menacing attitude in the very face of the Mexican authorities.

*This was the first hostile act.* Here was that "natural boundary" crossed, which, according to the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, [Mr. CHARLES J. INGERSOLL,] "was marked in the configuration of this continent by an Almighty hand—the stupendous deserts between the rivers Nueces and the Rio Grande"—that boundary which, "while peace is cherished, will be sacred." "Not till the spirit of conquest rages will the people on either side molest or mix with each other," continues that gentleman; and this was the act of your President, who "anxiously desired to cultivate and cherish friendship with every foreign Power," and who tells you in his message that "this war with Mexico was neither desired nor provoked by the United States."

As to the grounds of claim to this disputed territory lying between the Nueces (the western boundary of the province of Texas) and the Rio Grande, I shall not weary the committee with an examination of them. They have already been fully and ably discussed. It is enough to know, that the *Spanish* province of Texas did not extend beyond the Nueces; that the *Mexican* province of Texas was embraced within the same limits; that the *revolted* province of Texas was defined by the same bounds; that the possession and jurisdiction of the *Republic* of Texas never extended beyond the valley of the Nueces; and that the valley of the Rio Grande, and the whole country west of the desert which separates the waters of the Rio Grande from those of the Nueces, has always been, and was at the time of the advance of the army under General Taylor into that country, occupied by Mexicans, and under undisputed Mexican jurisdiction.

The *remote* cause of the war, then, was the annexation of Texas; the *immediate*, the military occupation by our arms of territory in dispute between the two Governments, *but in the possession* of Mexico.

The act of May last declares that war exists between this Government and Mexico, but throws upon Mexico the *onus* of its commencement. The charge is as false in fact, and unjust to Mexico, as it is disingenuous and cowardly in its authors. It was a vile attempt to cover up the grossest act of usurpation and aggression by the President known to the history of the country; and to mislead and inflame the public mind upon the momentous question of war with a neighboring sister, but weak and

distracted, republic. It is a charge in the face of the settled public opinion of the country and of the whole civilized world. The burden of the commencement of this war lies at the door of your President. Deny it as you will; reiterate and again reiterate the false charge against Mexico, the fact remains unaltered and unalterable.

But the war exists; and ample means for its vigorous prosecution were placed in the hands of the President by the act of May. If it has not been prosecuted with sufficient vigor, it has not been for want of means. I here find myself called upon, in common with every member upon this floor, to take a stand *for* or *against* its further prosecution.

In arriving at a conclusion of what duty requires of me in this crisis, I shall be governed by two things—the *necessity* and *object* of the war. And here I will remark, with the honorable gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. WINTHROP,] who addressed the committee some time ago, that I am not one of those, if any there be, who would, under all circumstances, withhold supplies for the prosecution of an existing war. So long as the nations of the earth continue the barbarous practice of warring against each other, force must be repelled by force. And although I deprecate a war as one of the greatest calamities which can befall a nation, and however much I might deplore any act of my country which would justify any civilized nation in the face of the world in waging war upon it, yet I shall at all times, and under all circumstances, be ready to *defend* my country, to the last man and the last dollar necessary, against the attack of an enemy. *Does such a case exist?* Is the prosecution of this war necessary for the defence of the country? No one pretends that it is.

Although Mexico has uniformly *claimed* sovereignty over Texas, and declared her intention at different times to restore it to her Confederacy, yet all her acts and intercourse with this Government show, conclusively, that it was her intention and desire to negotiate with a view to its final relinquishment; and nothing but the obstinacy of the President, and a determination to *seize upon* the desired territory between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, rather than submit it to the equitable and constitutional test of negotiation, prevented an amicable arrangement. He chose to rely upon *might* rather than *right*, and thus involved the country in a bloody and protracted war.

Mexico demanded that, antecedent to negotiation, the American fleet should be withdrawn from her coast, that no appearance of menace should overhang her friendly resolves—*not that the army should be withdrawn from Texas*. It was not, then, for Texas that Mexico was contending, but the *extent* of Texas and its equivalent.

Had the army of occupation remained at Corpus Christi, although a state of war might and would have existed between the two countries until amicable relations should be restored by negotiation, no hostilities would have occurred. The President was so advised. He was repeatedly informed by General Taylor, through his despatches, of the tranquillity upon the Mexican frontier, and the friendly intercourse between the people of Mexico

and those of Texas. He was further informed of the pacific intentions of Mexico, and her determination not to cross the Rio Grande with any military force, except small parties, for the purpose of "preventing Indian depredations and illicit trade."

Isaac D. Marks, Esq., formerly United States consul at Matamoros, in a letter to General Taylor, dated at China, in Mexico, September 23, 1845, and enclosed to the Secretary of State on the 28th October following, says: "I have the honor to inform you that I have had several conferences at Monterey with General Mariano Arista, commander-in-chief of the Mexican forces on the frontier of the Rio Grande, in relation to the differences at present existing between the United States and Mexico, and am pleased to state to you, that, from the opinion and views he made known to me, the Cabinet of Mexico is disposed to enter into an amicable arrangement with the United States in relation to the boundary, and all other momentous questions. \* \* \* \* \*

"General Arista pledged his honor to me, that no large body of Mexican troops should cross the left bank of the Rio Grande; that only small parties, not to exceed two hundred men, should be permitted to go as far as the Arroyo Colorado, (twenty leagues from the Rio Grande), and that they would be strictly ordered only to prevent Indian depredations and illicit trade. \* \* \* \* \*

"General Arista spoke also of Indian incursions on the frontier of the Rio Grande, and is under the impression that they could be prevented by the troops under your command, as the Indians always come from the Nueces river."

Here is not only a declaration of the friendly disposition of Mexico, but the acquiescence of the Mexican general in the jurisdiction of this Government upon the Nueces. But the President had determined to make "the line of the Rio Grande an ultimatum" in settling the question of boundary with Mexico, and General Taylor was accordingly ordered to take a position upon the bank of that river.

Well, sir, what followed? The Mexican general commanding at Matamoros notified General Taylor, upon his arrival there, "that the march of the United States troops through part of the Mexican territory [Tamaulipas\*] was considered as an act of war;" and he was summoned "to fall back beyond the river *Nueces*," not the *Sabine*. He was required to retire *within* the borders of Texas, not *beyond* them.

Does this look like an intention to invade our territory? for I admit that the President was as firmly bound to defend "the territory properly within, and rightfully belonging to Texas," as any other State of the Union; for it had been brought into the Union *under the form of law*, if not by authority of the Constitution. And although I am ready at any moment to gratify the people of Texas, who, according to the declaration of one of their Representatives here, [Mr. PILLSBURY,] would rather be out of the Union than in it—and in this I believe I have the sentiment of the nation with me—I concede, that so long as she remains a State of

\* Tamalescás.

the Union, she is entitled to equal protection and immunities with the other States. But, I ask, what evidence have we that it was the intention of the Mexican Government to invade the soil of Texas?

The President, in his message, says: "On the 18th of April, 1846, General Paredes addressed a letter to the commander on the frontier," directing him to "take the initiative against the enemy." But this was more than a month after General Taylor had, by order of the President, broken up his camp at Corpus Christi and marched into the disputed territory. The order to the commander was, that "the troops which thus act as enemies be ordered to be repelled. From this day begins our defensive war; and every point of our territory attacked or invaded shall be defended." This, instead of proving a purpose of invasion in Mexico, is all purely defensive. There was, then, no danger of invasion from Mexico, had the President suffered the army to remain within the borders of Texas, and negotiated with her upon terms which she contended her honor required, and which might have been acceded to without any sacrifice of honor on our part. She demanded that the immediate cause of difficulty between the two Governments—the Texas question—should be arranged by a special commission, before her acknowledgment of amicable relations (which had been interrupted by the annexation of Texas) by the reception of a resident minister. Surely that magnanimity which should always characterize the deportment of the strong towards the weak, of the offender to the offended, should have prompted the President to have yielded this point to the wounded pride of Mexico; and in accepting the challenge of peace proposed by this Government, to have given her the choice of arms. But, like a bullying tyrant, he persisted in his arrogant demands, and chose the more summary argument of the sword: fancying it, probably, the more popular, if not the most economical method of settling a dispute with poor and imbecile Mexico.

Texas demanded the boundary of the Del Norte to prevent the escape of her slaves; and her demand must be answered. It was the preservation of this "peculiar institution" which led to the annexation of Texas; it was this which required its extension to the Del Norte; and it is this which is pressing your army into the heart of Mexico, seizing upon province after province, for the purpose of extending its area.

Well, Mr. Chairman, if hostilities might have been averted in the first place, and were provoked by an act of aggression on our part, what evidence have we, what fears have we, that the invasion of our territory would result from a cessation of hostilities, and the withdrawal of our troops within our own territory? Sir, there are none. No one is mad enough to suppose that the country is, or could be in any danger from Mexico. She is poor and powerless for offensive war. And however united her people may be in the defence of their homes and their firesides, and however able she may be to maintain a resolute and protracted defensive war, she has neither the ability nor the heart to engage in a war of invasion. She contested successfully for long years the power of Spain

upon her own soil; and by that indomitable spirit of resistance, which has been denominated by a learned Senator [Mr. Cass] "the characteristic obstinacy of the Castilian race," succeeded in throwing off the Spanish yoke; but was repulsed, and her army, with its chosen leader, captured by a handful of Texans, whenever she stepped beyond the smoke of her own fires.

In warring for the subjugation of Texas, she would be contending for a mere abstraction—a something which she could not enjoy. If she had it she could not hold it: a people different in race, in religion, in everything which goes to make up the national character. It is as absurd to suppose that Texas could again become or remain a province of Mexico, as that the Mexican provinces could with safety to our institutions become States of this Union. But even should Mexico be mad enough to attempt an invasion of our territory, still there is no necessity for increased means of defence on our part. The regular army, with one-fourth of its present strength, could successfully defend the whole Texan frontier. Indeed, the honorable member from the western district [Mr. Pillsbury] tells us that Texas can defend herself against any force that Mexico can bring against her; and I believe she could. She did it when she was much younger and weaker, and why should she not do it now?

If, then, the prosecution of this war is not necessary for the defence of the country, what is its object? Sir, it is conquest—it is the acquisition of territory. This is the stimulant which has excited the maw of the President to gulp in province after province, and yearn for a continent. This spirit it was which prompted him to "congratulate" us, upon our assembling here, upon "the success which has attended our military and naval operations." "In less than seven months," continues he, "we have acquired military possession of the Mexican provinces of New Mexico, New Leon, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, and the Californias: a territory larger in extent than that embraced in the original thirteen States of the Union." And yet he proceeds to say, "The war has not been waged with a view to conquest!" and thus defines its object: "But having been commenced by Mexico, it has been carried into the enemy's country, and will be vigorously prosecuted there, with a view to obtain an honorable peace, and thereby secure ample indemnity for the expenses of the war, as well as to our much-injured citizens who hold large pecuniary demands against Mexico." Now, Mr. Chairman, leaving out that threadbare assertion, "having been commenced by Mexico," which the followers of the President may learn to repeat but can never believe, what, I ask, is it but a war for the acquisition of territory—a war for conquest?

But the President admits—his friends here avow it—it was declared by the official mouth piece of the President in the Senate, the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, a few days ago, that territory is to be acquired by this war. The amount of it is, the President will not invade Mexico for the purpose of seizing upon her provinces, but he will prosecute a war of invasion for a paltry claim, which Mexico had agreed to pay,



and had in part paid, and then hold her territory as an indemnity for the expense of the war.

Now, it matters not whether conquest be the object or the incident of the war. It is equally wrong, if the war be in itself aggressive and unjust. That it is aggressive has been already shown. Indeed it is evident that the President himself so considers it, from his long and labored apology for its commencement. The recovery of claims was an after-thought—a miserable pretext for a known wrong, which can neither be justified by any principle of justice, humanity, or economy. His rigmorale of wrongs, magnified and distorted, perpetrated by Mexico upon our citizens and flag, were, he says, “ample cause of war.” Why, the offence against the national honor, and the injury done our citizens were all wiped out by the treaties of 1839 and 1842. It was then reduced to a simple matter of dollars and cents; and it is upon this that the President now bases this destructive and expensive war. Really its *financial* are little better than its *moral* features.

I repeat, sir, this war is a war of conquest—a war for the acquisition of territory, and nothing else. With the Administration and its supporters in the South, it is a war for the extension of slavery. It is part and parcel of the Texas project, and for the same ends.\* With the Democracy of the North it is equally a war for the acquisition of territory, but with the exclusion of slavery; if, indeed, they be sincere in that, which I very much doubt. Some, I believe, are.

Now, I ask, is there a Democrat upon this floor who will vote another man or another dollar for the prosecution of this war, if territory cannot be acquired by it? No; not one.

Well, sir, I am opposed to the acquisition of another inch of slave territory. And I will here repeat what has already been declared by several gentlemen of both parties during this debate, that, with the people of the North, this is no longer an open question. It is a fact, and a *fixed fact*. Not another foot of slave territory will ever, with their consent, be added to this Union. We are not disposed to quarrel with our brethren of the South about slavery in the States, where it now exists, and which no power in this Government can reach; but believing it to be an evil, moral and political, we demand that the power of the Government shall not be applied to its extension.

But, sir, I am opposed to the acquisition of any territory—and especially by conquest. I deny that there is any power in this Government, expressed or implied, to acquire territory in that way. It is contrary to the very spirit and object of the compact; which is but a union of sovereign States for purposes of mutual protection and defence. I believe we have territory enough—and particularly such territory as those conquered provinces of Mexico; which have not an acre in a hundred, or in five hundred, that any North American would have as

a gift. But the mere acquisition of territory is not the worst feature of conquest. You propose bringing into this Union numerous provinces “inhabited by a considerable population,” (in the language of the President,) regardless of their will. Thus subverting that great principle of republican liberty, which accords to the people the right of choosing their own government. Free and munificent as ours may be, it is only so because it is voluntarily assumed. Throw your political system around a people without their consent, and you perpetrate the darkest deed of despotism—you deny them the freedom of choice.

I know that our system of government is expensive in its nature; but there is nothing known to the art of man which may not be destroyed by over-tension. It will expand as fast and as far as you people expand, and are ready for its protecting mantle. But when you propose spreading it by a single stroke over a whole series of provinces, if not an entire republic, peopled with a race different from our own in language, habits, and religion, without their consent, you give it a tenuity which the first rude blast will destroy.

But I am opposed to this war upon other and higher grounds. Much as I should deprecate the extension of slavery over territory now free, and a system of wild expansion which subverts the principles and threatens the very existence of the Union; still more do I deprecate its dark and damning crime; its useless and horrible sacrifice of human life, and the train of misery and woe which it brings to the bosom of many a widow and orphan thus cruelly deprived of a husband and a father. Time, in its eventful progress might free the slave of his shackles, and build up governments upon the scattered ruins of this republic; but it can never restore life to the dead, or heal the heart of the bereaved. The memory of the dead, and the tear of the afflicted, will endure with life—monuments of the fruits of this unholy war.

The dreadful alternative of war surely should not be resorted to upon trivial grounds. It can be justified only as a last resort; and then for cause, palpable and indisputable; a necessity not to be measured by *dollars* or *acres*, but imperious and unavoidable. In my opinion, this war rests upon no such necessity.

But we are told that the *merits* of the war are not now in question; that the country is involved in it; the Constitution places its conduct in the hands of the President, and we are bound to grant him the supplies necessary for its prosecution; upon him rests the responsibility. Well, I admit that those who approve of this war, and are in favor of prosecuting it for the ends proposed, are bound to grant the means. But, sir, I deny that any such obligation rests upon me. As a Representative upon this floor, sworn to support the Constitution of my country, I dare not skulk behind the responsibility of any man, however high or however low, upon questions vital to the Constitution, and, as I believe, to the honor and interests of my country. I have endeavored to show that this is a war, not of defence, but of offence; that it is not conservative, but destructive; and I wish to bear this discrimination in mind.

Wars, I have believed, are declared for cause;

\*From the Charleston (South Carolina) Courier.

“Every battle fought in Mexico, and every dollar spent there, but insures the acquisition of territory which must widen the field of southern enterprise and power in future. And the final result will be to readjust the balance of power in the Confederacy so as to give us control over the operations of Government in all time to come.”

and they are prosecuted for their intrinsic merit. The merit of an existing war is a matter of opinion; and, under our republican system, it will cease or continue as the majority shall determine. But the fact that this war of rapine and blood has a majority in its support, can impose no obligation upon the minority, nor release it from its responsibility to the country. On the contrary, as majorities are made up of individuals, and the question of peace or war may turn upon a single vote, accountability is *single*, and not collective.

The majority have the control of the means; the aid of the minority is therefore not *necessary*, but *gratuitous*. The war will continue as long as the majority desire it, and *no longer*. And every man is therefore, in my judgment, bound to himself, his country, and his God, to take one side or the other. He cannot be against the war and for it at the same time. He cannot be opposed to its further prosecution, and yet contribute to that prosecution—seeing that the safety of the country would not be endangered by its discontinuance, nor its honor compromised. His only power is his vote; and it is his vote which will indicate his choice.

Now, I am opposed to the prosecution of this war. My people are opposed to it. They have spoken in terms not to be disregarded or misunderstood. And being thus opposed to it, I shall vote against all measures intended for its further prosecution. This is the only means of prevention within my power. It is the means, and the only means, provided by the Constitution; and it is the very means contemplated by the framers of that instrument, as their proceedings show.

I believe this war to be wrong from beginning to end. Wrong in its inception; wrong in its prosecution; wrong in its designs and ends; and I shall vote according to my convictions. I cannot see how a war wrong in all its parts can be justly or honorably prosecuted.

As I have already said, were the safety or the honor of the country involved in the conflict, I should be ready to maintain firmly, and by every necessary means, their defence. But, Mr. Chairman, this is not the country's war—such an one as demands the coöperation and aid of every patriot heart. It is unworthy of being dignified with the name. It is a miserable political—a *party* game; in which the stakes are personal and party aggrandizement, and the die—the treasure of the country, the lives of thousands of your fellow-beings, and the tears of tens of thousands of innocent women and children. It is a heartless, a soulless game; and I can take no hand in it.

Did I believe—as I do not—that the voice of the people was for war—*indiscriminate war*, I would exert my feeble influence to correct the public taste, rather than cater for its morbid appetite. I would appeal to the virtue and intelligence of the people, rather than their sordid passions.

But I do not believe that the people are in favor of this war. I do not believe they are willing to cut the throats of the Mexicans and murder their women and children, that they may plunder them of their territory. I know there is not a Whig from one end of the Union to the other in favor of it; nor do I believe there is one who desires its further prosecution.

The question is asked, "How shall the war be brought to an end? Will you dishonor the country by withdrawing your army in the face of the enemy?" I answer, the progress of your arms have been but a continued scene of triumph and victory. Armies doubling in number your own have been met and driven from every battle-field in defeat and dismay. City after city and province after province have yielded to the superiority of your arms. So unequal is the contest that the very inferiority of that which we have made our enemy, renders victory at least a doubtful honor. The question is not, shall we withdraw our troops "in the face of the enemy," but *how far will you pursue him?* Over how many battle-fields will you track him by his scent of blood? How many lives will you sacrifice and how many millions will you squander to satisfy false honor and vain ambition? These are the questions which the country and the world will ask, and which every gentleman upon this floor is bound to answer.

For myself, I say, unhesitatingly, withdraw your troops within your acknowledged territory. Propose to Mexico terms of peace just and honorable, and she will not, she dare not, refuse them. Put yourself in the right, and the country and the world will sustain you.

But, "my country right or wrong" is the sentiment held up as the proper rule of action here. Sir, that sentiment is very good in its place. It was very proper in him who uttered it. It is a good *military* sentiment. It becomes a military man, engaged in the service of his country, to fight its battles—to obey the orders of his superiors, without stopping to inquire whether they are "right or wrong." He surrenders, by the very nature of his vocation, all will, except such as is subordinate to his command. He must obey or retire. But with the representative—the constitutional source of power—him whose province it is to control as well as obey, the case is far different. It is his right and his duty to *keep his country in the right*; and if he finds her deviating from the proper track, to bring her into it; and not plunge her deeper in the wrong because he finds her involved in it.

I admit that when the country is threatened with danger, although the cause which led to it may be wrong, it becomes every good citizen to stand by her. It becomes a matter of self-defence. The country must be defended and protected. This I claim for my own country, and this I would concede to Mexico. But a principle which may and does justly apply to a state of *defence*, is in a like degree unjust and wrong when applied to *offensive* war.

We hear complaints from the other side, that this war has not been prosecuted with sufficient vigor. Well, it may not become me, not having voted for it, to say whether or not there had been men enough sent to Mexico to die of pestilence in that deadly clime; but I do say, that it has not been retarded by the want of means. The act of May last placed at the disposal of the President twice the amount of men that he has ever had in the field. He has pursued precisely the course of all others best calculated to promote a protracted, expensive, and a deadly war. He has sent men in

lance of means. He has struck at remote provinces, instead of the heart of Mexico—threatening dismemberment of her territory, rather than the subjugation of the sovereign power. He has driven her people into a defence of their homes and their hearth-stones. He has united them, men and women, in an inseparable bond of self-defence. Ay, and has given to her a President and a General, who, like all others, possesses the power of uniting her arms and giving vigor to her arms.

In his attempt to "conquer a peace," he has provoked a determined and protracted war. He has rejected the olive branch, if not beyond his reach, at least so far in the distance, that no human vision can discern it. He has the responsibility of all of this; and I, for one, am willing that he shall have all the glory. I will not add a pillar to his support; neither will I pluck a laurel from his brow.

But, Mr. Chairman, it appears that the rules of this game require a change of men: that it shall henceforth be conducted with regulars, instead of volunteers; that the volunteers who have so promptly responded to what they believed to be their country's call, and who have so bravely sustained the nation's flag on every battle-field, are to give place tardily-enlisted regulars, for the purpose of giving greater efficiency to the army.

Why, sir, I have heard it exultingly, and as I ought, triumphantly proclaimed, that this willingness and ability of the citizen soldier to defend promptly and efficiently the country's flag, proves the world the inherent strength of our political system, and the utter uselessness of the danger and expense of a large standing army. I heard this declaration with pleasure and with pride. I confess it struck me as a jewel in a mass of rubbish—an oasis in a desert. In the multitude of wrongs there seemed to be one redeeming quality. But why refute this proud position—the characteristic of freemen, and of freemen only, by this acknowledgment of its fallacy? It is a calumny upon our system; an insult to the patriotism of the people, or it is an acknowledgment of the weakness of our cause. Either the voluntary aid of the people cannot be relied upon in the hour of need, or your

war is so utterly destitute of merit that patriotism refuses it its support.

There is one other feature of this war which I wish briefly to examine, and I have done that is its cost. You cannot sum it up to-day at an amount less than fifty, and it may be a hundred millions of dollars. The excess of expenditures over estimates, the appropriations necessary for deficiencies, and the uncertainty of the duration of the war, render it a matter rather of conjecture than calculation. But certain it is, that it already has, and will continue, far to exceed the revenue of the country, and an enormous public debt will be the inevitable consequence.

The ordinary expenses of the Government—the interest on the debt, will require all, and more than all, of the revenue which can be gathered through the usual channels—the customs and the lands. And, as if to aggravate the difficulties which necessarily flow from a state of war, we have, in the midst of it, uprooted the established financial policy of the country, and embarked upon a wild sea of experiments which have never been heretofore untried, or have been commonly only to be rejected and condemned.

Now, I ask, in the name of the tax-payers of this country, how is the deficiency to be met? Is this debt, which you are heaping upon our heads, without providing any means for its redemption, and are daily increasing by your "I must pay," to be paid? That is the question—there any escape but through taxation—direct, grievous, oppressive taxation? Sir, there is no escape. Your astute Secretary of the Treasury—that great wonder of the age, in all his deep plunges and his lofty flights—his far-seeings and his shortcomings, has conjured no alternative. Will the people consent—can you lull them to submission by your empty shouts of glory, and your blazoned victories, to the continuance of this war, an unavoidable consequence, a grinding tax?

The day of reckoning will come; and those who sit in high places, and those who sustain the government there, will have to answer at that bar which patriots too often most dread—the bar of public opinion.

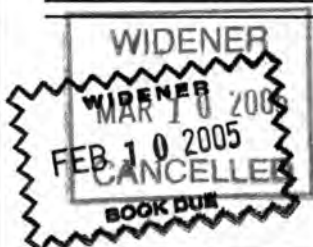


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